



The Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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State Fire Marshal's Office urges fire safety for Christmas trees *Videos show hazards posed by dry trees*

NASHVILLE, TN – The State Fire Marshal's Office is reminding Tennesseans with natural, fresh-cut Christmas trees in their homes to take care to keep them in water because of the fire risk posed when they are allowed to dry out.

"Properly maintaining a cut Christmas tree's moisture content of more than 100 percent by keeping it in water significantly reduces the chance that its needles will dry out and pose a fire hazard," State Fire Marshal and Commerce & Insurance Commissioner Julie Mix McPeak says.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), structure fires caused by Christmas trees result in an average of four deaths, 21 injuries, and \$17.3 million in direct property damage annually. Christmas tree fires are not common, but when they occur, they are likely to be serious. On average, one of every 66 reported fires that began with a Christmas tree resulted in death. A heat source too close to the Christmas tree started one of every five (18%) of these fires.

To illustrate the short time in which a dry, cut Christmas tree can catch fire and engulf a room in flames, the Tennessee State Fire Marshal's office is distributing links to two videos produced by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

- <http://1.usa.gov/v6OFLT> – side-by-side comparison of the burn rates of a properly maintained tree and a dried-out tree.
- <http://1.usa.gov/uzAmw1> – Christmas tree fire rapidly overtaking a room.

In addition to keeping natural trees watered, the State Fire Marshal also shares these Christmas tree safety tips:

Picking the tree

- If you have an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled, certified, or identified by the manufacturer as fire retardant.
- If Choose a tree with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched.

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DAVY CROCKET TOWER, 10th FLOOR
500 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
NASHVILLE, TN 37243
www.tn.gov/commerce/

Placing the tree

- Before placing the tree in the stand, cut 1" - 2" from the base of the trunk.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, like fireplaces, radiators, candles, heat vents or lights.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.
- Add water to the tree stand. Be sure to add water daily.

Lighting the tree

- Use lights that have the label of an independent testing laboratory. Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Connect no more than three strands of mini string sets and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of LED strands to connect.
- Never use lit candles to decorate the tree.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.

After Christmas

- Get rid of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are a fire danger and should not be left in the home or garage, or placed outside against the home. Check with your local community to find a recycling program.

Don't forget to install smoke alarms on every level of your home and to test them monthly. Develop and practice a home fire escape plan with everyone in your home. The plan should include two ways out of every room and a designated meeting place outside where everyone can be accounted for.

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